
NEWSREPORT

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WOMEN AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY

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VICTORY OVER "CUSTER'S REVENGE"

Kristen Reilly

Production and distribution of pornographic home video game "Custer's Revenge," which features the rape of an Indian woman as entertainment, has been discontinued by Game Source after the company acquired sales and distribution rights from American Multiple Industries (AMI). Created and marketed by AMI, "Custer's Revenge" was greeted with outrage and protests by feminists, Native Americans, and the American public.

On January 6, 1983, Richard Miller, president of Game Source, acknowledged to *USA Today* that his company was dropping "Custer's Revenge." Miller explained that he didn't want to sell a game that "represents to many rape and racism or violence towards women."

This victory is the outcome of efforts of Women
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Custer's Revenge

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Against Pornography, American Indian Community House, the New York chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW), and individuals and groups around the country that protested the racist rape game by demonstrating or writing letters. On October 14, 1982, over 250 demonstrators from American Indian Community House, Women Against Pornography, NOW, and other groups denounced "Custer's Revenge" at the New York Hilton, where it was being shown to the trade. Since then Women Against Pornography has collected over 10,000 signatures protesting "Custer's Revenge" through the tabling efforts of Page Mellish. While the protest was going on, Atari, on whose game system "Custer's Revenge" and other "adult" games must be played, received an estimated 1,200 complaints daily about the game. The corporation subsequently filed suit against AMI for wrongful association of the Atari name with the AMI product.

On October 21, 1982, Suffolk County (Long Island) legislator Philip Nolan moved to seek legal action to block the sale of "Custer's Revenge," along with that of another home video game, "Firebug," on the grounds that the

games presented "an imminent danger to the people of Suffolk County."

**"We're in this business
to make bank deposits."**

Home video game pornography originated in 1982, when Stuart Kesten and his partner Joel Martin developed "Custer's Revenge," "Bachelor Party," and "Beat 'Em and Eat 'Em." The "adult" market for home video games is currently expected to gross one billion dollars annually.

When feminists and Native Americans attacked "Custer's Revenge" for promoting rape and racism, AMI denied that the game had anything to do with rape, even after their spokesman Richard Lewis had publicly stated that the game entailed "tying an Indian maiden to a post and ravishing her." Although the game's promotional material and package depicted a full-color image of an Indian woman bound to a post, AMI insisted that their game showed an act "between consenting video images."

Money is clearly the key motivating force behind "Custer's Revenge." As Stuart Kesten, president of AMI, told *Fortune* magazine, "We're in this business to make bank deposits." W.A.P. member Alexandra Matusinka asserted, "The saleability of themes of rape, and racism, and dehumanization in game format demonstrates that racist and sexist values are endorsed by society. The

manufacturer of the games is transferring these values to future generations."

New name, same "game."

Joel Martin, Executive Vice President of AMI, has formed another company, Playaround, which is now manufacturing, selling, and distributing AMI's line of "adult" home video games. As president of Playaround, Martin oversees the company's operation. So although

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AMI's promotion for home video games. The package for "Custer's Revenge" is on the left. The two games on the right—"Beat 'Em and Eat 'Em" (top) and "Bachelor's Party" (below)—are currently being distributed by Playaround.

AMI seemingly has divested itself of its pornographic home video games, the new manufacturer, Playaround, is in reality nothing but a new name for the old enterprise.

Martin's other home video game creations, "Bachelor Party" and "Beat 'Em and Eat 'Em," were advertised in *The Video Retailer* under the slogan "When you score, you score!" In "Bachelor Party," a male figure "scores" sexually with several female figures, each "hit" obliterating them from the screen. Clearly the game encourages men to view sex as conquest and women as targets for sexual aggression.

In "Beat 'Em and Eat 'Em," two female prostitutes run

across the screen trying to catch drops of ejaculate in their mouths from a man masturbating on the roof above. This game depicts female prostitutes as objects of male contempt and degradation.

Both games offer men and boys the opportunity to participate in the ridicule and devaluation of women, taking males one step closer to real-life violence against women. Both actively reinforce the message that men are conquerors, while women are targets, victims, objects to be used and abused. These games legitimize sexual violence and threaten the safety and well being of all women and girls.

Women live the "game."

Arcade-style games in bars have already begun to include "adult" themes. In social situations, these games pressure women to participate in their own ridicule and objectification, or risk being called poor sports, prudes, humorless, etc. The presence of these games in bars reinforces the idea that bars are male territory.

The gang rape in a New Bedford, Mass. bar on March 6 was a horrifying real-life enactment of the "game" of rape on male turf, complete with female target, players taking turns, and cheering audience. "Custer's Revenge," "Bachelor Party," "Beat 'Em and Eat 'Em," and other pornographic home video games are only one step removed from real-life sexual abuse of women.

Women Against Pornography will continue to protest pornographic home video games. At present, the group is monitoring those games currently on the market, as well as those scheduled for distribution later this year. □

EDUCATE YOUR COMMUNITY

Women Against Pornography has developed a multi-faceted educational program designed to raise consciousness about the meaning of pornographic images and messages and their impact on our lives and our culture. The program includes:

- A slide show for adults, consisting of a script and images from mainstream ads to hard-core porn. Sale of this slide show is \$200. Rental is \$200, with \$100 reimbursed when the slide show is returned.
- A speaker from the W.A.P. speakers' bureau, with slide show. Fee is negotiable. Call the storefront at (212) 307-5055 for information.
- A slide show for middle- and high-school students, containing images from mainstream ads, movie promotions, record album covers, fashion editorials, and *Playboy* covers. Also includes lesson plan, homework assignments, and script. Officially approved by the NYC Board of Education for use in NYC public schools. Purchase price is \$200. (Not available for rental.)
- Feminist-guided tours of the Times Square pornography district. Special tours for groups. Both mixed and women-only tours offered. Price is \$7 per person. Call (212) 307-5055 to sign up for a tour.